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ABSTRACT

Despite exhortations from public relations practitioners, theorists, and educators as to the need to equip practitioners with management skills, a review of 59 academic programs in public relations finds that most undergraduate programs appear to pay only lip service to this goal. While many programs offer no undergraduate courses specifically devoted to public relations management, syllabi for those public relations management courses which are being taught reveal both a lack of consensus as to how public relations management is conceptualized and wide variations in course content emphases. Recommendations are that: (1) public relations management needs to be taught to undergraduates; (2) public relations management courses need to emphasize specific management techniques and skills; and (3) instructors need to make clear to students the consequences of failing to develop management skills. The review of the undergraduate teaching programs generated a list of suggestions for public relations management course content and identified numerous innovative teaching strategies (involving managing a public relations department, budgeting and scheduling, management trends, and issues management) used in public relations management courses at a variety of institutions. (Contains 30 references.) (Author/RS)

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Teaching Public Relations Management:

The Current State of the Art

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Teaching Public Relations Management:

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Abstract

Despite exhortations from public relations practitioners, theorists and educators for the need to equip practitioners with management skills, a review of many of the largest academic programs in public relations finds most undergraduate programs appear to pay only lip service to this goal. While many programs offer no undergraduate courses specifically devoted to public relations management, syllabi for those PR management courses which are currently being taught reveal both a lack of consensus as to how public relations management is conceptualized and wide variations in course content emphases.

Issues examined by this study include the extent to which public relations management is taught; the nature of PR management course content; implications of the management education vacuum on public relations trends. The authors offer recommendations for PR management course content and highlight examples of innovative teaching strategies currently in use at programs around the country.

Teaching Public Relations Management: The Current State of the Art

As the movement toward greater professionalism and accountability in public relations has gained momentum in recent decades, practitioners, theorists and educators have issued a clarion call to define public relations as a management function. Fulfilling this function requires practitioner knowledge of business and management skills needed to earn significant involvement in organizational decision-making. One place to obtain at least fundamental training in management would be the undergraduate curriculum. This study assesses the current role of public relations curricula across the country in preparing public relations graduates for managerial responsibility.

Public relations management: in practice, in teaching and in theory

In practice. The increased emphasis on elevating public relations and its practitioners to a place in the managerial ranks was highlighted by PRSA's announcement last year that it had revised its mission statement, reflecting its goal for the year 2000 to position public relations as "an indispensable component of senior management" (Warner, 1993). However, both the practitioner and scholarly literature indicate that lack of management skills is perceived to be a primary obstacle to achieving this goal.

Employer dissatisfaction with practitioners' level of management expertise and "business savvy" has been well documented (Bick & Hilliard, 1991; Simon, 1993; Turk, 1989). Turk's (1989) survey of public relations practitioners found that lack of financial and budgeting skills were seen as the greatest deficiency in practitioners moving from technician to manager roles, with other deficiencies, in order from most lacking to least lacking, being problem-solving and decision-making, goal-setting and prioritizing,

planning and organization, analytical skills and time management.

Similarly, PRSA leadership, including former president Kerryn King and Gold Anvil Winner Patrick Jackson, has urged that practitioners strengthen their understanding of finance, management theory, and organizational behavior (Baskin, 1989).

Practitioners suggest that it is preferable that future public relations practitioners acquire management skills as students rather than assuming they will acquire them on the job. "Current practitioners and managers think students would be better prepared for work in their organizations if they learned more while they are still students about the business aspects of these organizations and about the non-communication aspects of their future public relations careers," Turk concluded (p. 51). Other practitioners lament that on-the-job training to familiarize public relations staffers with business operations may never materialize. (Simon, 1993).

In teaching. While public relations management has long been a central course offering in graduate-level programs, this has not been the case in undergraduate programs. There are indications, however, that educators are cognizant of criticisms about lack of management skills in their graduates, and are giving greater consideration to including management content in undergraduate curriculum. Undergraduate public relations textbooks, for example, increasingly have emphasized public relations as "a management function" and have encouraged aspiring practitioners to acquire the skills necessary to become members of an organization's "CEO huddle." A 1987 roundtable on teaching the management course, held in conjunction with the AEJMC convention, drew educators interested in sharing ideas for course content (Toth, 1987).

Turk (1989) argues that preparing students for entry-level positions is no longer a sufficient mission for PR educators: programs must prepare students for "lifetime careers that almost certainly will offer the likelihood or opportunity of managerial involvement in addition to the practice of technical skills" (p. 38).

Still, it is not clear that all the talk about preparing undergraduates for management responsibilities has been translated into widespread curricular change. Baskin (1989) notes,

> "The harsh reality is that many students have graduated as public relations majors with the majority of their course work in areas not well designed to prepare them for the business and organizational world in which they are seeking jobs. While they may have received the training in writing and other areas of communication needed to accomplish the technical function, they lack the understanding of the managerial, organization and environmental context in which their skills must be productively applied" (p. 32).

In theory. The need for participation in management is a central theme which runs throughout the work of public relations theorists involved in the recent IABC-sponsored study of excellence in public relations (Grunig, 1992). The general theory of public relations developed through this project maintains that the senior public relations practitioner must be part of the dominant coalition, function at a high level of decision-making, and participate in strategic management if public relations is to be excellent and is to make the organization more effective (White & Dozier, p. 91).

Organizational theorists suggest that power to affect the direction of the organization and the public relations department within an organization is based partly on the value of input provided to the decision-making process (Weick, 1979). In addition, the power-control perspective would suggest that the dominant coalition will resist change unless compelling benefit is

evident, perhaps in the form of problem-solving (Dozier & Grunig, 1992, p. 411). Enhanced management skills address both the ability to provide valued information and the ability to solve problems rather than perform routine activities in a functionary role.

A number of researchers have offered a compelling case for the importance of culture in the success of an organization (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Smircich, 1983; Weick, 1979). Although cultures vary from organization to organization, management procedures and language form an integral part of most organizational cultures. In common parlance, this is known as talking the talk and walking the walk of business. Given the power of cultural factors within an organization, public relations practitioners must be able to walk and talk like managers or risk being viewed as outside the management circle.

Curricular guidelines neglect management

One reason why more colleges may not offer undergraduate public relations management courses is that the curricular guidelines on which many public relations sequences were premised neglected the teaching of management at the undergraduate level. Two influential national commissions charged with developing curricular guidelines for public relations sequences did not recommend public relations management as a *required* course or content area for undergraduates.

The 1975 Commission on Public Relations Education only mentioned Organization and Management of Public Relations as a course which should be

offered at the master's level.[1] The 1987 Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations recommended that public relations students give strong consideration to business as a minor, noting that it was the leading recommendation by practitioners and educators responding to the Commission's research. It was suggested that case studies and campaigns courses might provide opportunities for students to practice managerial skills; however, a course in public relations management per se was not among the suggested courses for the commission's model five-course curriculum.

Only at the *graduate* level was public relations management included as one of the designated courses recommended by the National Commission on Graduate Study in Public Relations (1985).

Another reason why colleges and universities may not offer public relations management courses is the perception that management topics should be the domain of the business school, a view that Turk (1989) decries as "passing the buck" (p. 51). Sending students to the business school is not always easy, as many have responded to overcrowding by closing their classes to students who are not their majors (Baskin, 1989), or by requiring a daunting number of prerequisites before students can enroll in management courses. In addition, Baskin has criticized business school courses for emphasizing business environment trends and policy-making at the expense of techniques and tools necessary for action-oriented responses, producing graduates without the skills to turn policies into corporate reality.

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[1]The 1975 commission recommended that the undergraduate public relations sequence include courses in communication theory, writing for the mass media, copy editing, graphic communication, introduction to public relations, publicity media and campaigns, case problems, and an internship or practicum.

Implications of the management education vacuum on public relations trends

Manager/technician dichotomy. Dozier (1983) applied role theory to public relations, and found that practitioners generally performed one of two distinct roles: those of managers and technicians. Managers' work involves them in policy-making and strategic decision-making, whereas technicians are associated with comparably low-level activities which serve to implement the policy decisions of others.

Practitioners' perceived management competencies are likely to determine whether they will serve in the managerial role or be relegated to the less desirable technician role. Lauzen (1992) has posited that technical skills prevent practitioners from gaining strategic power, while management skills enable practitioners to gain such power. Dozier & Grunig (1992) have charged that public relations education's neglect of management may perpetuate the manager/technician dichotomy. "Public relations students are trained for the practice through "war stories" and "what-we-did-when-it-hit-the-fan" case studies. Public relations education, then is among the forces of "activity preservation" that perpetuates functionary public relations" (p. 408).

Encroachment. There is a growing body of evidence which suggests that the management education vacuum leads to encroachment, the management of public relations by professionals from departments and specialties other than public relations (Dozier, 1988; Lauzen, 1992). Encroachment results in the loss of autonomy and power of public relations practitioners, and reflects a devalued perception of practitioners' ability to manage. One of the primary reasons for encroachment is a lack of management competencies among practitioners (Lauzen, 1992).

Gender considerations. Lack of management skills has particularly

critical implications for women. The feminization of public relations[2] has brought with it concerns about gender-based disparities in pay, opportunities for advancement into management, and the status of public relations in the corporate hierarchy (IABC, 1986; Shaible & Russell, 1990). The influential Velvet Ghetto study (IABC, 1986) found that women are perceived as being ineffective managers, show less interest in acquiring management skills, and are more likely to fill technician rather than management positions.

More recent studies have found that female practitioners are more likely to experience encroachment than males (Dozier & Lauzen, 1990). Lower-level management competencies in women -- or perceptions that this is the case -- account for this finding (Lauzen, 1990). The picture that these studies paint suggests that lack of management skills, while problematic for the field in general, has particularly adverse consequences for women, and will likely maintain the salary gap between men and women and the "glass ceiling" effect that prevents their advancement.

Exclusion from the dominant coalition. The implications of the management education vacuum suggest a snowball effect that will haunt practitioners throughout the course of their careers. New practitioners will lack management skills. Practitioners without management skills will not advance beyond technician roles, are likely to find themselves managed by someone from a non-public relations background, and as a direct result of these restraints, will be excluded from the dominant coalition of organizational leaders. These obstacles will be magnified for women, who now

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[2]In 1986, the proportion of women in business communication was estimated at 70 percent (IABC, 1986). In 1991, 62.4 percent of bachelor's degrees in public relations from programs in colleges of journalism and mass communications were granted to women (Kosicki & Becker, 1992).

comprise a majority of practitioners.

If enhancing the status of the public relations field is dependent on inclusion in the dominant coalition, as White & Grunig (1992) and others have suggested, then providing opportunities to learn management skills at the earliest possible point in the educational pipeline would appear to be of fundamental importance.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

These concerns led us to focus on the role of public relations education in providing management skills to future practitioners, and particularly, on the public relations management course as the most obvious source intended to provide this kind of content. We wondered, how is management content taught to undergraduates, if it is taught at all, and what is the current state of the art?

RQ 1: To what extent is public relations management/administration taught at U.S. colleges and universities?

RQ 2: How is management defined in public relations management courses?

RQ 3: To what extent do public relations management courses teach action-oriented techniques for management of people, operations, budgets, schedules, and strategic decision-making?

RQ 4: To what extent does course content recognize the link between management skills and critical trends related to encroachment, gender issues, and professional advancement, and the status of the field?

METHOD

We contacted public relations sequences in 59 U.S. colleges and universities. Our goal was to gain a general sense of the extent to which public relations management courses are taught and the nature of curriculum used in these courses.

Respondents were selected through a combination of three methods: 1) Using the Annual Census and Analysis of Enrollment and Graduation (Kosicki & Becker, 1992), we contacted the 35 largest programs in journalism and mass communications, as measured by number of bachelor's degrees granted in 1991. 2) Because this source only includes public relations programs housed in departments of journalism and mass communications, we also contacted the 25 largest public relations programs, as measured by number of juniors and seniors majoring in public relations, as identified by Ross & Johnson (1993). 3) Finally, we contacted all public relations programs, regardless of size, which were indicated to offer undergraduate courses in public relations management/administration by the PRSA directory, Where to Study Public Relations (Kendall, Terhune & Hesse, 1990).

Each of the 59 programs was contacted by telephone to determine if it offered an undergraduate course in public relations management/administration, and if so, to request a copy of the syllabus for the course. Three attempts were made to obtain this information from each school. In some cases, we spoke directly with faculty members who teach the public relations management course. In other cases, we acquired this information through conversations with department heads or departmental secretaries.

Syllabi received were examined with particular attention to course content, assignments, and texts used. In the area of course content, we were interested in determining how management was conceptualized by the instructor, and what topics were emphasized, particularly whether specific techniques to aid in management and the trends of encroachment, gender and other issues were covered. In the area of assignments, we were interested in learning how management content was operationalized for students, for instance, through a

case studies approach, or through contact with practitioners in the field. We looked at textbooks with an eye for the extent to which textbooks being used emphasized management skills.

FINDINGS

Our findings suggest that management topics are given only cursory treatment in most public relations programs.

The call from practitioners and scholars for increased emphasis on management skills does not appear to be reflected in current curriculum. Even in courses designated as "public relations management," creative and technical communication skills continue to be emphasized rather than managerial skills, such as techniques for managing resources and personnel.

Extent to Which Public Relations Management is Taught

Of the 59 schools contacted, we identified 23 which offer an undergraduate course in public relations management/administration. Thirty-three offer no undergraduate course devoted specifically to public relations management. Three schools did not respond to repeated messages and could not be classified into either category. It should be noted that had we not purposely searched for courses in PR management with the aid of the PRSA directory, our selection method based on programs with the largest number of degrees granted and largest number of junior and senior PR majors would have missed a third of the programs we found which offer courses in public relations management. Thus, size of program is not a reliable indicator of whether public relations management will be offered. The fact that many of the largest public relations programs do not offer a course in public relations management is an indication that the public relations curriculum is

behind the times.

Contacts at a number of schools which do not offer a designated PR management course indicated that they include what they consider to be management content in other courses, such as campaigns and case studies. Budgeting and time management techniques, for instance, might be included in a campaigns course. Therefore, it would be unfair to conclude that schools which do not offer a course titled public relations management do not teach management skills. However, our conversations with instructors would indicate that under these arrangements, the inclusion of management skills in the curriculum is quite haphazard and peripheral, rather than systematic and central to the course content.

Some contacts at schools which do not offer public relations management courses offered explanations for why this was so. Key among these was the belief that public relations management skills are more appropriate for graduate students than for undergraduates, who could be expected to work for five or more years before reaching a position of management responsibility where such skills would be put to use. As one educator put it, "At age 22, pretty much all they can do is manage themselves." Another rationale we encountered for not offering a public relations management course was that some programs require public relations majors to take courses from the business school which provide management skills content, such as introductory business management and accounting courses. As noted previously, educators have criticized this strategy as a less than optimal solution.

How PR management courses define management

Eighteen syllabi for public relations management/administration courses were received. Our review found a lack of consensus about how public relations

management is conceptualized by instructors. Four distinct views of public relations management emerged:

Public relations as a management function. Syllabi representative of this view provided little reference to management content in the course other than to state, usually in an introductory paragraph, that "public relations is a management function." There were often no indications that management topics would be covered in the course.

Management as the four-step public relations process. Syllabi exhibiting this view appeared to reflect the instructors' belief that implementation of the four-step process[3] *was* management. Course content did not indicate that specific management techniques (for budgeting or scheduling, for instance), would be covered or were necessary tools to aid in implementation of the four-step process. These courses often revolved around student projects to develop campaigns for real or hypothetical clients.

Management as policy-making. This view was reflected in syllabi which emphasized strategic thinking and critical analysis as fundamental competencies which students would exercise in the course. Specific managerial techniques received cursory attention in these courses. Case studies often served as the basis for critical analysis.

Management as both policy-making and technique. This conceptualization was reflected in syllabi which treated the course as an opportunity for students to practice both strategic decision-making and to learn specific techniques for the allocation and management of resources and operations.

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[3]Popularized in the public relations curriculum by acronyms such as ROPE, RARE and APIE, the four-step public relations process includes the steps of research, objective setting, program planning and implementation, and evaluation.

Management techniques related to budgeting, scheduling, managing personnel, managing program implementation, and issues management were given deliberate emphasis and were central to lectures and assignments throughout the course.

We would suggest that the last perspective is the optimal conceptualization for public relations management courses. Perhaps not surprisingly, however, it was only reflected in three of the syllabi we reviewed, while 10 syllabi were characterized by the management-as-policy-making perspective and the remainder were fairly evenly distributed into one of the first two categories. The problem we see with the view of management as policy-making was expressed recently by the press secretary for Georgia's lieutenant governor, speaking to a class of University of Georgia students:

> [Public relations majors] tend to think above the real elements of day-to-day work. . . . They're either not interested in the day-to-day stuff or they think themselves above it all, which really hurts them in the long term. Even if you are the manager making the grand plans, you've got to know how the worker bees work. (Beck, 1993)

It appears that the way that management is defined has a primary influence on the type of assignments which the courses require.

Extent to which PR management courses teach managerial techniques

The syllabi review found a great deal of variation in how much emphasis is placed on teaching management topics and skills. Some courses appeared to be essentially case study or campaigns courses masquerading as management. More emphasized creative campaign and materials production than emphasized specific managerial techniques.

Only a handful appeared to make a deliberate, systematic effort to teach tools for effective management.

Assignments. Textbook case studies and interaction with real-life

practitioners appeared most frequently as the centerpieces of public relations management courses. Textbook case studies involved reading assignments, "what-would-you-have-done?" analyses, and class discussion. Interaction with "clients" typically involved student projects to develop proposals for campaigns; develop proposals as well as implement campaigns; and analyze previously-executed client campaigns. These methods were used in schools which lacked separate courses in case studies or campaigns, suggesting that the PR management course may be serving "double duty" for their departments. More surprisingly, case studies and campaign development were also at the heart of course assignments in schools which offered separate courses in cases and campaigns, suggesting that instructors need to find more distinctive curricular frameworks for management content.

Assignments which offered an alternative approach included student projects to design public relations departments and create short-term and long-term departmental plans, including annual budgets, policies for evaluating employees, and operational schedules. These assignments appeared to give students better opportunities to learn and practice specific management techniques.

We also found that a third of the PR management courses required students to write resumes and/or compile professional portfolios, sometimes as a component of campaign projects, and other times, we suspect, because the management course was one of the last courses students take before graduation.

Texts. A total of ten different public relations texts were used as primary textbooks in the PR management courses we identified. Grunig & Hunt's Managing Public Relations and Center & Jackson's Public Relations Practices,

Managerial Case Studies and Problems were used most frequently.[4] Two PR management courses did not use traditional textbooks at all, instead relying on course packets of journal articles. (In one of these cases, the instructor explained in her syllabus, "Unfortunately, there is no good book out on public relations management.") In other cases, traditional textbooks were supplemented with required readings from popular business management literature, such as Peters & Waterman's In Search of Excellence. Two programs required students to choose books from reading lists of such books. Several programs also required students to subscribe to national newspapers, such as the Wall Street Journal or The New York Times.

The supplementation of public relations texts with business literature and the wholesale rejection of existing texts by two programs suggests to us that instructors perceive existing texts to be deficient in their treatment of management trends and techniques.

Taken together, the nature of assignments and textbooks indicates that even in public relations management courses, specific management techniques tend to be neglected in favor of emphasis on strategic decision-making, the four-step process and campaign planning.

Extent to which courses recognize the link between management skills and professional issues

The syllabi review indicates that only two courses appear to inform students of the link between management competencies and professional issues such as encroachment, career advancement, particularly for women, and the

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[4]A previous study (Morton, 1992) found textbooks most frequently used in public relations management/administration courses were Managing Public Relations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and Experts in Action (Cantor, edited by Burger, 1989).

overall status of the field. In both cases, gender issues were the only topics specifically identified. A third syllabus indicated a class lecture on "contemporary issues," but it was impossible to discern what these issues were. If other courses inform students of the implications of the management skills vacuum, it was not reflected in their syllabi. This finding leads us to question the extent to which educators are aware of the direct connections between managerial deficiencies and problematic public relations trends.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study lead us to three general recommendations:

1) PR Management needs to be taught to undergraduates. This is the simplest and most logical way to give students the "business savvy" that practitioners complain they don't have and which employers often do not provide in a systematic way. The PR management course, more than case study, campaigns or other standard undergraduate classes which necessarily have other foci, presents the best opportunity to give students, particularly females, the skills they need to advance from technical to managerial positions and avoid encroachment. Management content should be taught in the public relations sequence, rather than the business school, to ensure that students receive this training as part of the required curriculum.

Schools which have been using public relations management courses to serve dual-duty as campaigns or case studies courses should consider developing a separate course in public relations management which can give management skills content adequate attention. If making room for a new course is an administrative impossibility, then instructors should consider substituting assignments revolving around case studies and campaigns for those

which offer the greatest opportunity to practice management skills. We offer a list of some of these in the following sections.

2) Public relations management courses need to emphasize specific management techniques and skills. This paper has argued that a view of management as policy-making or creative strategy development is not sufficient. The best analytical and decision-making skills are of little practical value without a nuts-and-bolts knowledge of basic techniques for accounting, budgeting, scheduling, and monitoring program implementation. We question the extent to which textbook cases or campaign development exercises provide students with the opportunity to learn and practice these managerial techniques. The well-rounded public relations management course must provide opportunities to practice both strategic decision-making and the more technical managerial skills. Several syllabi that we reviewed appear to offer students this blend.

3) Instructors need to make clear to students the consequences of failing to develop management skills. Students need to understand that failure to gain managerial competencies will have a long-range, negative impact on their life-time earnings and advancement. This is a particularly important point to emphasize to female students, for reasons cited previously, and to the many students who are attracted to public relations because they see it as an outlet for creative expression. Not only instructors of public relations management courses, but all faculty and counselors who are involved in student advisement should be made aware of the importance of students' gaining management skills before they enter the job market. Opting for a non-managerial track should be done intentionally, not by virtue of inadequacies in course offerings and course content.

Suggestions for PR management course content:

Based on our review of PR management syllabi, our own experiences teaching public relations management, and techniques used successfully by colleagues at other colleges and universities, we offer the following suggestions for PR management course content. We emphasize that we do not believe that this is *everything* that should be taught in a public relations management course; rather, these are key content areas which should be included or added.

1) Techniques for managing public relations activities:

- Superior/subordinate relationships
  - * Assessing staffing needs
  - * Hiring, supervising and evaluating employees
  - * Relationships with management and other departments

- Resources of time and money
  - * Scheduling techniques (Gantt charts)
  - * Budgeting techniques (Zero-based budgeting, incremental adjustment)
  - * Fundamental accounting concepts such as cash flow, profit and loss statements/balance sheets, overhead, billing methods

- Operations/program implementation
  - * Techniques to aid in long & short-range planning
  - * Techniques to aid in ongoing monitoring and evaluation (for instance, computer software programs, issues management, PERT)
  - * Criteria to evaluate proposed programs and strategies

- Personal progress on the PR career ladder
  - * Skills for advancement to management
  - * Professional accreditation, continuing education

2) **Understanding top management concerns**
   * Defining basic financial issues of concern to organizations, such as productivity, profitability, funding, stock valuation, capitalization
   * Management trends (i.e., total quality management, decentralization, "intrapreneurship")
   * Organizational culture

A sampling of innovative teaching strategies from public relations management courses

The following teaching strategies represent what we consider to be "the state of the art" for public relations management courses today. These assignments emphasize specific management content and skills to aid in both strategic decision-making and program implementation. Rather than duplicating techniques used in case studies or campaigns courses, these assignments are distinctly appropriate for teaching public relations management.

Managing a public relations department. Appalachian State University students act as the public relations manager for a corporation of their choosing. They develop a one-year administrative plan for the department, which requires them to develop policies and employ techniques for selecting, supervising and evaluating personnel; for developing, monitoring and revising operational and capital budgets; for working with other departments and external service providers; and for creating organizational and public relations objectives. Public relations management courses at The University of West Florida and Syracuse University also require students to develop model public relations departments.

Managing superiors and subordinates. At Rutgers University, students in the public relations management course gain experience in dealing with both clients and subordinates. The students work with a client organization to

research a real-life public relations problem, develop a public relations plan, and supervise the execution of the program by students in a PR campaigns class, including assisting in evaluating the campaign and students' work (See a description of this assignment in Hunt, 1991).

Budgeting and scheduling. At the University of Georgia, a budgeting and scheduling exercise is incorporated into an assignment to create a written communication piece for a real-life "client." Before beginning the writing project, students listen to class lectures on various budgeting and scheduling techniques, and then prepare budgets and timetables which estimate the time and costs involved in producing the written piece. When the project is completed, students submit a "post-mortem" memo which discusses how close their estimates came to being accurate. Students are often surprised to learn how many factors influence the budgeting and scheduling process.

Research as a management tool. At the University of Oklahoma, research skills are emphasized as techniques to aid managers in developing and evaluating public relations programs. Students take on group research projects for clients, which include developing questionnaires, convening focus groups, and data processing with SPSS.

Management trends. At Ohio State University and Southern Methodist University, students learn about management issues and trends by choosing books from a reading list of contemporary business/management books, which they analyze and report on from a public relations standpoint.

Issues-management. At Washington State University, students choose a contemporary issue to track and research media coverage of the issue throughout the semester.

CONCLUSION

This study of public relations management education argues for the need to teach a range of management concepts and skills at the undergraduate level, but our findings suggest such teaching happens all too rarely. When public relations management is taught, courses emphasize the strategic process while giving short shrift to the specific skills which are necessary to translate policy into action.

Perhaps the neglect of specific management skills arises because the instructors themselves, many who come from journalism rather than business-school backgrounds, are unfamiliar with basic techniques of accounting, budgeting, and personnel management. Or perhaps, an appropriate text is not available. It is possible, also, that the ongoing debate about public relations education -- and whether it is preferable to a liberal arts education -- has given some instructors the misguided impression that any discussion of nuts-and-bolts topics contributes to the perception of public relations education as a "trade-school" education. Yet nuts-and-bolts skills like writing press releases and communications material production continue to be at the core of most academic programs, while practitioners and employers tell us that managerial skills are sorely lacking in public relations graduates.

The current study can only speculate about why management concepts and skills are not more directly addressed in public relations curricula. Whatever the reasons or circumstances limiting course offerings and course

content in public relations management, educators across the country should re-double their resolve to overcome such obstacles. By doing so, public relations teachers can fulfill the promising vision of the field depicted by theorists and sought by leading practitioners of public relations.

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